



LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

76th Year

2 SEPTEMBER 1977

3,938

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TLS

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

FRIDAY • 9 SEPTEMBER 1977 • No 3,939 • 22p

SCOTLAND

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The ideal of the Covenant

By Hugh Trevor-Roper

WILLIAM FERGUSON:
Scotland's Relations with England
A Survey to 1707
312pp. Edinburgh: John Donald.
£12.There are two main schools of
thought among the historians of
the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707.
Both advance a perfectly reputable
and arguable case. I shall call them,
for convenience, the "unionist"
and the "nationalist" schools; and
I shall begin this review by sum-
marizing their respective views as
fairly as I can.The unionist school believes that
the Act of Union was the culmination
of a process which had begun
earlier and had been advocated by
rational Scotsmen like John Mair
and King James VI and I. This view
is generally supported by the fact
of previous negotiations, by the cita-
tion of contemporary opinions and
arguments, and by the explicit con-
tinuity of the same ideas, which
refer to the economic and political
advantages of union to both
countries. Its advocates may also,
though they do not necessarily,
argue that the two countries were
culturally similar, both being
originally Celtic societies subjected
though in differing degrees, to
Saxon and Norman invasion or
infiltration.On this argument, the Lowlanders
of Scotland, who dominated it politi-
cally and rewarded the Highlanders
as barbarians, were essentially of
the same Saxon stock as the Eng-
lish, and their political separation
from England was merely a histori-
cal accident. But whether this racial
argument be accepted or not, the
unionists emphasize the unmiti-
gated benefits of the union to both
countries in the Middle Ages and
the aggression of Edward I, and
afterwards of Henry VIII, which
unsuccessfully exacerbated, if it
did not create, Scottish nationalism.
The English, they maintain, damaged
the arguments for union, but they
did not destroy them, and after the
Protestant Reformation in both
countries and the Union of Crowns
in 1603, the pressure grew stronger
—so strong that even the Cromwell-
ian conquest did not significantly
reduce it; for within ten years of
the Protector's death negotiations
for a complete union again. Accord-
ing to these unionist historians, the
final Act of Union of 1707, though
(like all such treaties) affected by
immediate political interests, was
an act of far-sighted statesmanship,
fulfilling a real need, and they hold
that this is demonstrated by—
among other results—the great
material and intellectual advance of
Scotland in the eighteenth century.Against this "unionist" argument
some Scottish historians have main-
tained a rival "nationalist" thesis.
Their argument is that the Union
of 1707 was not "natural" but was
an artificial distortion of Scottish
history: that there had never been
any significant demand for it in
Scotland; that the voices periodi-
cally raised in favour of it were
unrepresentative, factious or cor-
rupt; and that the final Act was,
at best, a temporary necessity or
convenience, at worst, a corrupt
betrayal. The "nationalist" histori-
cal school of Scotland, according to
this view, has been the result of
people having a distinct national iden-
tity.This distinctness could of course
be the result of accumulated histori-
cal events, but here too the argu-
ment can be reinforced by a racial
thesis. According to some
nationalist writers, Scotland is not
a dual society of Highland Celt and
Lowland Saxon but a unitary Celtic
society which was merely super-
ficially Saxonized in certain Low-
land areas. These Lowlanders, there-
fore, had no natural pull towards
these Saxon neighbours in England.
That "natural" pull is towards the
provincially alienated Highland "bar-
barians", who can now be reclaimed
as a necessary counterpoise to the
real racial aliens of England. In
this view, there is nothing homono-
us or unhistorical in the assumption
that the Lowlanders of the
Highland traditions which they had
once despised.However, such racial arguments
are risky, and prudent nationalists
are careful not to lean too heavily
on them. They take the distinct-
ness of the Scotch people as a
datum, agree that it was sharpened
by the attempted English conquest,
and emphasize the institutional and
cultural differences between the
two countries. The two most
obvious of such differences (both
respected by the Act of Union) are
in law and religion. On the whole,
the nationalist historians who have
established themselves in the
departments of Scottish History in
Scottish universities, though they
draw on the racial argument at
need, owe more to the Covenanted
Presbyterianism of the seventeenth
century than to the Celtic tribalism
of the Highlands.Having thus set out the terms of
debate, let us now turn to the book
in hand. William Ferguson, reader
in Scottish History in the University
of Edinburgh, is a "nationalist"
historian, very learned in his field,
and active just as those from whom
he differs. He is particularly
enraged by "sociological histori-
ans" and the jumbled, tenden-
tious and unchronological "analysis"
of the kind now fashionable, and
he does not spare those whom he
finds guilty. These are the arguments
heresy. In contrast to those
conspicuously "latter-day"
meta-historians with their "deep,
woolly and highly theoretical expla-
nations", he preaches himself on his
own serious attachment to facts
and dates. These, if scrupulously
handled, he believes, prove the
nationalist thesis to be true and its
critics, in general, either knaves or
fools.One method which he adopts to
prove it is perhaps a little too easy.
Mr Ferguson does not believe in
fairly setting out the arguments
which he intends to demolish.
Instead, he sets up a row of home-
made skittles which he then
triumphantly bowls over with self-
congratulatory gusto. He counts
on the view that the Union
came about through a
"Grand Design", that it was a
"myriad of metaphysical con-
cepts", "the work of the
Almighty", which, ennobled "with a
statuesque quality" as part of "a
cosmic pattern", "a collective
totem or deodand", "a beyond
logical cause and effect". Naturally
he has no difficulty in referring
to this "slight determinism". But
what serious historian has ever
advanced it? What serious
historian, for that matter, has pre-
sented Scottish history as an
imaginary or mythical construct,
Celt and Saxon, or has asked so
"obviously a non-question" as
"why the Scottish reformers did
not follow the way of England"?
What serious historian has tried to
explain the Presbyterianism of Scot-
land by "the worn-out theme of
"religion and the rise of capital-
ism"? Or has argued that the
Union of Crowns in 1603 united the
two countries "in an organic
sense"? Or has ascribed the Scot-
tish revolution of 1688 "to the
so-called Law's Liturgy and the
mythical Jenny Geddes"? Or
has seen Jacobitism as "just an
added sentiment" entertained by
divine-right dotards at long last
despatched by progress"? Or has
argued that "national thought was
virtually unknown before 1 January
1707"? Having ascribed such ideas
to "latter-day meta-historians",
Mr Ferguson then proceeds to
show that they are "latter-day"
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Times of the sign

By Jonathan Culler

THEODORE TODOROV:
Théories du symbole
375pp. Paris: Seuil, 59fr.

Semiotics has a venerable history, though changes of name and domain have prevented that tradition from becoming an object of veneration. Reflections on signs and signification have been part of rhetoric, philosophy, hermeneutics, aesthetics, linguistics, literary criticism, anthropology, and psychoanalysis; and one can confidently predict that the coming years will witness attempts to order this immense patrimony. Theodore Todorov, who would be much better equipped than most to carry out a synoptic project, has left ambitious visions of order to others. In *Théories du symbole* he offers neither a history of semiotics nor systematic investigation of a particular problem but rather reflections on various episodes in the history of sign theory.

This loose, episodic structure has two advantages. Precisely because he is not writing a history, Todorov can propose bold historical hypotheses; and since he is not committed to narrative or analytical consistency, his chapters can each offer the kind of discussion most likely to be useful. For *Phomme muet* intellectual, one imagines, rhetorical theory is best treated by efficient summary, Romantic aesthetics by broad survey, and modern treatments of the symbol by direct critical examination. Todorov has always had a talent for providing useful books, and here, as always, he is extremely clear, explicit about what he is doing, and willing to risk over-simplification for the sake of communication. This is one of his better books, presenting a variety of information with clarity and intelligence.

The subject of the first three chapters is the discipline of rhetoric. After a summary of the

various strains of classical thinking about the sign and the synthesis achieved by St. Augustine ("the founder of Western semiotics"), a chapter on "Splendeurs et misères de la rhétorique" describes the radical transformation of rhetoric in the classical period: from an art of persuasion, wholly functional and pragmatic in nature, to an inventory of tropes and figures which were literary and ornamental rather than political and efficacious. Once rhetoric became a system of tropes, Todorov argues, it was doomed, though it lasted until the end of the eighteenth century, when it finally expired as a discipline. Todorov attributes its demise to bourgeois Romanticism, an ideology of individualism. One cringes at the invocation of an "enriched Romantic ideology," but ironically, Todorov is probably right: what is responsible for the decline of rhetoric as a discipline may well be the most sketchy and banal version of post-Enlightenment ideology.

The next three chapters discuss sign theory in the context of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century aesthetics. After an unsympathetic account of the impasse reached in the eighteenth century by an aesthetic of mimesis, Todorov argues, in a chapter on Lessing, that the attempt to combine a theory of the sign with a theory of mimesis is what "fait éclater l'essence classique". There then follows an eighty-page account of the new aesthetic, as developed by the German Romantics. For those who do not have firsthand acquaintance with the many texts in question, this is an extremely useful introduction with abundant quotations. Moritz is rehabilitated; the non-mystical side of Novalis is accessed; and of course the Schlegels, Schelling, Kunt, and Goethe are well represented.

The issue to which Todorov devotes most space is the distinction between symbol and allegory and the resulting aesthetic of the symbol. The length of exposition and the positions of the quotations create high expectations here, and

when Todorov simply breaks off ("Je m'arrête là... on admettra que la notion de symbole... concentre, à elle seule, l'ensemble, ou au moins les grandes lignes de l'esthétique romantique") one is disappointed.

If one takes as the core of a Jung book the Romantic theory of the symbol one ought at least to consider the fact that Solger, whom Todorov quotes, thought that Romantic art was allegorical rather than symbolic; and one ought to come to terms with, for example, H. G. Gadamer's claim that the valorization of the symbol results from a failure to distinguish between experience and the representation of that experience, or Paul de Man's seminal discussion of symbol, allegory, and irony in *The Rhetoric of Temporality*. This criticism is appropriate, let me emphasize, only because Todorov does devote a great deal of space and thought to the matter.

After this major chapter the book

takes a surprising turn. Instead of analyzing the modern version of symbol, Todorov abandons aestheticism until his last chapter (a homage to Jakobson which establishes interesting links with Romantic poetics). He also abandons his historical perspective and presents three extremely interesting essays.

The first, "Le langage et ses doubles", argues that theorists, while claiming that language is a rational system composed of arbitrary signs, have described symbolic phenomena by attributing them to others: to children, primitives, ancestors, neurotics, poets. These descriptions of the deviant and superstitious practices of others are in fact displaced accounts of the symbolic phenomenon and functions of a culture. The second, explicit in the work of Freud, whose investigation of condensation and displacement in dreams and jokes (two non-serious or deviant symbolic activities) is in fact a discovery of the symbolic and rhetorical structures of language in general. This is Todorov's conclusion after critical examination of

the mechanisms Freud describes: "en gros, il se contente de recoder les distinctions rhétoriques et de les appliquer systématiquement à un champ nouveau. En revanche, du côté de l'interprétation, Freud innove réellement." This will doubtless become an important essay on Freud.

Finally, we have an account of a curious episode in the career of Ferdinand de Saussure: his attempts to assess the language of a woman who was "speaking in tongues", and his failure to conceive of various symbolic, psychological explanations. Whence Todorov's conclusion that "dans leur condamnation, explicite ou implicite, du symbole Saussure, Lévy-Bruhl et même Freud sont... des néo-classiques plutôt que des romantiques, contemporains de Condillac bien plus que de Platon, de Moritz, de Goethe ou de Schlegel". If this conclusion makes problematic the historical schema on which the book is ostensibly based, one is nevertheless pleased that Todorov chose to give us these chapters on the repression of the symbol rather than seek historical consistency.

All done with mirrors

By John Sturrock

LUCIEN DALLEMBACH:
Le Récit spéculaire
253pp. Paris: Seuil, 45fr.

Lucien Dallembach's subject is the *mise en abyme*, that piteous narrative sophistication by which novelists build into their novels a dramatized, miniaturized reflection of the novel's principal theme. He believes, and I am sure he is right, that the term has been used too loosely to describe specular practices in fiction which are far from identical and whose differences are of account. His taxonomy of them is helpful.

The term of *mise en abyme* was originally taken by André Gide from the language of heraldry, where it

refers to the small coat of arms in the centre of a larger one which reproduces the blazon exactly (the same system, with its worrying possibilities of an infinite regression, used to figure on the labels of Camp Coffee bottles, which showed a bottle of Camp Coffee, complete with label, which showed a bottle of Camp Coffee... J. M. Dallembach gets down to serious business with Gide, and with the admirable *misses en abyme* of *Patience* and *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, and works his way through the various realizations of the form to make his own typology.

He recognizes three distinct types, according to whether the reflection in the text reflects the content of the text, the form of the text, or, more obscurely and ambiguously, the code of fiction in general. He makes an excellent, very patient case for trying to keep these three types apart in our minds the next time we unearth a *mise en abyme*.

His examples are not all from the twentieth century by any means; it is one of the greater virtues of the book, indeed, that it should have proved how common and traditional a device the *mise en abyme* is. Something M. Dallembach might have gone into, in fact, is whether it has not sometimes been used as it were inadvertently, as the result perhaps of an irresistible obsession rather than of a clear decision. At least there is no chance of any contemporary French writer being so haphazard: *Le Récit spéculaire* ends with a section on the *nouveau roman* and its self-conscious progeny, where *misses en abyme* have spawned as never before. M. Dallembach's conclusion here is that their use has become so frequent and systematic that whole novels need to be construed, impossibly, as the mirror-image of themselves—the part has suddenly become the same size as the whole. Such are the odd perils of progressivism.

The Cordelier line

By Colin Lucas

JACK RICHARD CENSER:
Prelude to Power
The Parisian Radical Press
1789-1791
186pp. Johns Hopkins University Press, £10.

The main interest of *Prelude to Power* resides in its discussion of radical ideas during the early period of the French Revolution. Compared with the volume of work done in recent years on the democratic phase of the Revolution, our knowledge of the Constitutional Monarchy remains patchy and increasingly out of date. Of no aspect is this truer than of radicalism, for which we possess little more than a couple of approaches early in this century and a slight thesis on workers' movements. As a result, the radicalism of both the Jacobins and the sans-culottes appears to materialize very suddenly in 1793—so much so, indeed, that historians have tended to emphasize the essentially transient nature of these movements not merely as political phenomena but also as ideologies. Equally, the long absence of interest in the revolutionary years after the fall of Robespierre has made these radicalisms seem to disappear just as abruptly. Some attempt has recently been made to explore the survival of Jacobinism under the Directory. However, we have little more than general platitudes on "the radical tradition" with which to discuss the connection between democratic and popular movements in the Revolution and the formation of intellectual and working-men's radicalism in the nineteenth century.

Jack Richard Censer's book addresses itself to the six most long-lived newspapers, edited by men more or less associated with the radical Cordelier group. The best known of these are Marat's *Ami du Peuple*, Desobry's *Révolution de France et de Brabant* and Prudhomme's *Révolution*, all Paris. Since these six papers appeared for more than eighteen months, they allow the author to catch the special emphases of Cordelier attitudes by their repetition over a continuous period and by the journalists' response to specific events. However, one may question the wisdom of taking such a limited sample when the author himself identifies fifty-three journals as emanating from the Cordelier group. The ideas of the ephemeral publications may well not have differed substantially from those of the papers studied by Mr. Censer. None the less, one would have felt more comfortable if this had been demonstrated by a comparative study of the two types of publication and one would have welcomed some discussion of the kind of issue that stimulated the more sporadic broadsheets.

The hallmark of Cordelier democratic radicalism was a Manichaean vision of a society sharply split between people and aristocracy. Although such a concept clearly provided a substructure for later radical interpretations which saw society as a bourgeois-proletarian dialectic, it did not really persuade the Cordeliers themselves (though Danton and Desmoulins veered sharply away from these ideals) and the most radical element was its only men in power to attempt to implement the demands of the will of the aristocracy was its ultra-revolutionary proconsuls in the departments.

March

That night, the wind caught in the drapery,
Howling in tongues,
Frightening him upright in the bed.

The garbled message sent his heart wild to help—
Squeezing, jettisoning, damming,
Gushing, syncopeating, fibrillating,
And finally cancelling itself out.

"How nice for him," they said, at daybreak,
To slip away quietly in his sleep."

Connie Bensley

The clergy of Gap

By John McManners

TIMOTHY TACKETT:
Priest and Parish in Eighteenth-Century France
350pp. Princeton University Press, £14.60.

The diocese of Gap—90,000 souls in 213 parishes under the care of some 350 priests—was not regarded as an attractive see by the aristocratic bishops of the *ancien régime*. The charming château on the hill overlooking the episcopal city and the sonorous faulx d'âne of Count were not regarded as sufficient compensation for the isolated life in the mountains of Dauphiné, the harsh climate and the exiguous income; a bishop generally moved on to better things after a few years (unless, like Mgr de Narbonne-Lara, he was a court chaplain, and had to ask the king's permission to leave Versailles to visit his flock rather than vice versa).

Though the old diocese did not exert a magnetic attraction on its bishops, it has had the power to draw a skilful modern historian to its mountain paths, in the person of Timothy Tackett, the lure being the survival of excellent archival materials. This rich documentation, professionally ransacked in the Archives Nationales and the archives of three departments and other repositories, has enabled Dr Tackett to provide a full picture of the life of the rural clergy, using the statistical techniques fashionable among historians today, but never for

getting the human interest of his subject. It is true that the diocese—perhaps because the clergy were so poor financially—was almost of eccentrics, scholars, wisps and lively characters generally; there is no one to compare with the rumbustious and learned curé Robin of Angers who greatly delighted me in my researches of twenty years ago. For the diocese of Gap we have to make do with Dominique Chaix, an amateur botanist, and the uncompromising figure of Henri Raymond, the well-known exponent of the grievances of the lower clergy on the eve of the Revolution. But if the story lacks colour, it is remarkably complete. The first two-thirds of the book describe the clergy of the last generation of the *ancien régime*, their education and the cautious conferences by which they tried (or were supposed to try) to continue it, their revenues, their liturgical and pastoral functions, their relations, sometimes stormy, with their parishioners, and their attitude, always intolerant, to Protestants. The last third of the book sets the static tableau in motion; it concerns the "revolt of the curés" and their conduct in the early days of the Revolution. As the elections to the Estates General in Dauphiné were differently organized from those in most of the rest of France, this narrative is particularly welcome, though the uninitiated reader may not always follow the complexities.

The special feature of Dr Tackett's book, however, is the quantitative analysis of the recruitment and "career patterns" of the clergy. (Pierre de Vassières' *Curés de campagne de l'ancienne France*, published in 1933, based on the letters received by the *archevêque* of the clergy, with its fascinating, but so impressionistic picture from which it is dangerous to generalize.) The chronological pattern of recruitment shows—as in some other parts of France—a decline from 1730, then a peak in 1755, a decline again from 1766 and a new rise just before the Revolution. Priests were drawn from families in the economic élite (three-quarters from the top 30 per cent of payers of capitation in each locality); a third came from the merchant-artisan milieu, rather fewer from the peasants (though these two categories overlap), and rather more from the "notables". Vocations tended to run in families and to fall on younger sons.

In the earlier part of the century they are mainly from the south of the diocese, but later on mainly from the north, and while the vast majority of clergy took the oath to the Civil Constitution of the clergy, priests' "abdications" in the Terror came mainly in the south. Dr Tackett suggests explanations for these and other statistical findings, explanations ranging from changing economic circumstances to changes in the climate of spirituality, though he wisely refrains from advancing any totally comprehensive formula.

On the analogy of a review of a detective novel, it seems fairest, in a short article, not to summarize these findings, but to leave the reader with some of the main clues in the hope that he will make a point of turning to this excellent volume to discover the hypotheses on which the professional investigators are currently working.

The poet who spoke "heavenly labials in a world of gutturals"

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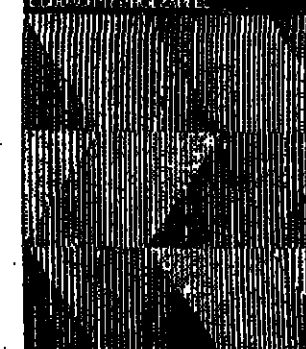
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Localisations and Grothendieck categories

Localisations and Grothendieck Categories
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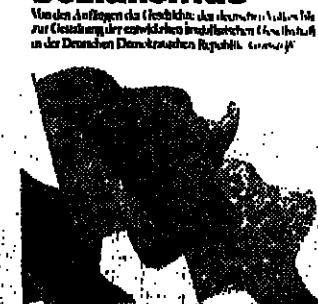
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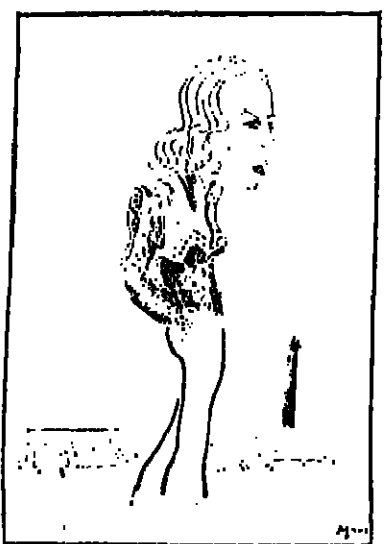
Klassenkampf-Tradition-Sozialismus

Klassenkampf Tradition Sozialismus
Von den Anfängen der Geschichte des deutschen Volkes bis zur Gestaltung der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik—Grundriss



796 pages, cloth 570 211 S 27,- M.

This publication, which later will be followed by comprehensive representations of the German people and of the German Democratic Republic, is a result of several years of work of historians and other social scientists of our republic. On a base of a new analysis of the historical facts, outstanding events, fundamental processes, and important problems, are presented by this conception. The proportions of the publication are determined by contents and results of historical development. Therefore the period of transition from capitalism to socialism which has been introduced by the victory of the Great Socialist October Revolution is dealt with in an especially extensive way according to its historical importance. In this connection the history of the GDR gets a special place. The origin of our republic, and its development, are recognized as regular result and crowning element of the history of the German people.



Silly and Prince Theodoric at Attila Andriod's party, *Thud* (London in the Morning), *Widenerpool* in Venice, *N. Truque* at home—some notable dancers to the Music of Time as interpreted by Marc. Next Thursday, September 15, is celebrated the first appearance in paperback of *Heavenly Secret Harmonies*, the twelfth and final volume in Anthony Powell's novel sequence. *Pontano* are re-launching the entire series with a set of new, specially-commissioned jackets. Marc's other drawings are equally observant and attuned to the work's mood: they span the years from Charles Strindberg at home to the Quigley family at the Magnus Damers Memorial Dinner, by way of Sir Magnus himself (complete with multi-coloured Ruff-Royce), Captain Rowland Groatkin (complete with background of Nissen huts), and *Widenerpool* in both civil and military guise.

With the Georgian josses

By Maurice Richardson

RICHARD INGRAMS:
God's Apology
A Chronicle of Three Friends
256pp. André Deutsch. £5.50.

The Authors Club in Whitehall Court was a snug, if faintly rusty little enclave with a strong Edwardian atmosphere. On the walls were William Morris tiles and framed letters from Shaw, Wells, Kipling, Barrie, Rider Haggard, Quiller-Couch, Maurice Hewlett, Anthony Hope. Here, as late as the autumn of 1947, you might find the three friends who form the subject of this triptych: Hesketh Pearson, Hugh Kingsmill and Malcolm Muggeridge.

Kingsmill would be reclining on a small battered black leather sofa with his white hair flouting out over a brass ashtray, his crimson face beaming with benevolence. Pearson sat at his head; Muggeridge at his feet. Kingsmill did most of the talking.

His voice was exactly like a coriander's but much amplified. It was a Georgian literary man's voice, well adapted for unimpassioned or human folly in the teeth of a Cote d'Ivoire gale but apt, in a confined space, to upbraid the unaccustomed skull, like that West Indian reggae music which can make elderly white parents beg for mercy. Whenever he paused for breath his friends burst into roars of totally unforced laughter.

Young clergymen, who had been

recommended the club as "exceptionally good value and a nice and quiet if you want to think things over or do some writing", crumpled up their sermon notes in despair. The late Mr Midgley, known as the poor man's J. B. Priestley, abandoned his leading article "A Bookman in Bradford" for *John O'London's Weekly*, of which he was the editor, and stumped off home to Clapham Common. Yet, such was the current of bonhomie engendered, it was difficult for even the most calloused of sensitives to feel menaced by agents from Philistia. Kingsmill, in particular, had that rash but indisputably Christian habit of treating complete strangers as old friends. You would not have guessed that he was tormented by gastric ulcers and had little more than a year to live.

All three of these ebullient literary journalists, nature's Theophrasti, with markedly cyclothymic temperaments, have, or had—for Muggeridge alone survives—much in common. There might have been some danger of their fusing under the biographer's hand into one composite figure, like the three poets in Robert Altrock's fantasy *Three Poets*. But, especially as Richard Ingrams stresses the triad aspect, in *God's Apology* he has been careful to preserve their very different identities. He never neglects Kingsmill or Pearson but Muggeridge, always most generous of friends, has primed him with detail and he seems to have elicited, by some microphonic proxy, with them both. The result is a very readable and on the whole successful experiment.

Of the three rather complex case-

histories, that of Hesketh Pearson (1887-1964) is perhaps the simplest. An unusually intelligent and well-educated actor, he turned biographer and used his natural gift for empathy to identify with characters as diverse as Oscar Wilde, Conan Doyle, Shaw, General "Jan" Nicholson, hero of Delhi in the Mutiny, and Gilbert and Sullivan. He went through several bad patches, emotional and circumstantial, but became deservedly a best-seller and can be labelled a distinct success. His literary vices—under included writing a joke book of diplomatic maxims, attributed to Sir Rennell Rodd, which, owing to the pusillanimous spite of Allen Lane, landed him in court; also a surprisingly naïve admiration for Frank Harris. A natural establishment member, he was vital and humorous, physically the tall good-looking clown type. It is easy to see why Ingrams finds him so sympathetic.

Hugh Kingsmill (b 1890, son of Sir Henry Lunn of Lunn's tours, but he used his Irish mother's surname) was chronically unsuccessful, as much so that he became an *author* as *any* type of writer. He too had experienced the Harris phenomenon (as Shaw said of Ingrams: "He is neither first rate nor third rate nor tenth rate; he is simply his unique abnormal self") and put Frankie undernourished into his first novel which he wrote in 1918 when a prisoner of war.

Some of Kingsmill's fans, among them William Gerhardie, carried away by his personality, would maintain that he was unfairly treated as a writer. Yet he does

not read well. Even Ingrams found *The Poisoned Crown*, his biographical study of power, corruption, heavy going. He was an excellent talker, full of ideas; he had a deep feeling for literature and at times remarkable psychological flair; but I suspect that when it came to arranging words on paper with white spaces in his own instructions. There are also some interesting pages about *The Earnest Atheist* (1936), his savage attack on Samuel Butler, in which E. M. Forster said: "an attack so brutal and so persistent that it may well be the result of a guilt complex".

Some of the younger generation may think it strange that a professional iconoclast and perpetual student like Richard Ingrams should elect to venerate three such old-fashioned, albeit lovable, Georgian josses. If so, it would be a superficial judgment. Such short-cuts between points on adjacent curves of history's spiral are not uncommon. For the sworn debunker, avowedly anti-intellectual, anti-Bloomington, anti-avant-garde, and anti-avant-garde, who admits to having found him a powerful civilising influence, by his infectious euphoria, like a textbook case of hypomania, which he never ceased to emit even under the bleakest circumstances. Richard Ingrams has vivified him skilfully, though I wish he had told us more about his last wife, a Jungian lady practitioner, I believe. One wonders how she and Muggeridge got on.

Muggeridge's literary success, his *Confessions*, and consequent religious anti-

slavery, are outside the scope of the book. He features mainly and very accurately in relation to his friends. One or two warts are carefully and faithfully painted in, possibly on his own instructions. There are also some interesting pages about *The Earnest Atheist* (1936), his savage attack on Samuel Butler, in which E. M. Forster said: "an attack so brutal and so persistent that it may well be the result of a guilt complex".

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Muggeridge's literary success, his *Confessions*, and consequent religious anti-

Almost all Aldington

By J. A. Morris

NORMAN TIMMINS GATES (Editor):
A Checklist of the Letters of Richard Aldington
171pp. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press (distributed by Trans-Atlantic Book Service). \$9.85.

Richard Aldington (1892-1962), author of the best-selling First World War novel *Death of a Hero*, became a controversial figure and to a large extent still remains so. No critical consensus has emerged concerning his achievements as a creative writer, while other men (for example Eliot, Pound and Wyndham Lewis) with whom he worked have an established and significant place in modern letters despite the complexities and controversies associated with their work. Moreover, the doubts about Aldington's career apply very much to his personal life: to the reasons behind his self-imposed banishment in the late 1920s, apparent in his *Confessions*, and his antagonistic relationship with certain famous friends. Ironically, the kind of "overwhelming" questions which Aldington led us to ask, *Death of a Hero* was prefaced by a letter from Aldington to Halcott Glover, dated Paris 1929, yet the checklist makes no mention of this letter either. It does seem a little premature to produce, however meticulously, an incomplete checklist of unavailable letters.

But whatever reservations there may be about its present general value, Professor Gates's book is an admirable piece of scholarship. No serious student of Aldington's life and work will be able to ignore it, and its significance will increase as his reputation becomes more firmly established and the relevant letters more widely accessible. And what we need now is a decent edition of Aldington's collected

letters followed by the checklist itself. Few books can show such painstaking scholarship as Norman Timmins Gates exhibits in his compilation of this checklist, or lists, of some 7,000 of Aldington's letters, mainly stored in American universities. Over 100 pages are devoted to nine lists giving chronologies and indexes so that you can check when, for example, Janet Flanner or George Gribble were sent a letter or when the letter was written and where the letter is now held. You too even told who Janet Flanner and George Gribble were.

I think it is fair to say that the book's overall effect is rather frustrating. One would like to read the letters themselves, instead of being fed information about them of a kind more suited to a starving computer—much of the book reads, and looks, like pieces of print-out. Have not things been done in the wrong order? Should not this checklist have appeared after the letters themselves were published—however much Professor Gates may claim to the contrary in his preface? There also appear to be some "substituting omissions": the letters to Eliot, Pound and Wyndham Lewis are good, but where are there no letters to H. C. Lawrence? If they have disappeared, then should not that fact at least be mentioned? *Death of a Hero* was prefaced by a letter from Aldington to Halcott Glover, dated Paris 1929, yet the checklist makes no mention of this letter either. It does seem a little premature to produce, however meticulously, an incomplete checklist of unavailable letters.

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W. JOHN SMITH:
The Behaviour of Communicating An Ethological Approach
545pp. Harvard University Press. £13.65.

Two of the obsessive preoccupations of our time intersect in and constitute the expertly interlarded semiotic theme of this book: the nature of communication and the communication of nature. Fascination with the manner in which animals commune with one another and their two-way commerce with man is persistently attested to by our allegories and myths. Animal communication is a perennial and doubtless universal literary motif variously exemplified by Plato's philosophical dog and Walt Disney's Pluto, Aesop's fabled menagerie and Robert Merle's science-fiction seas and dolphins. The curious 1892 book of Richard L. Garner, on *The Speech of Monkeys*, belongs in a twilight genre between science and outright hokum; it is an archetype of sorts for a currently very popular form of mass entertainment: the featured monkey poles in the innermost 1960s and stars widely touted. American chimpanzees or gorillas in this pseudo-sophisticated decade.

In his scarcely read lampoon, included with his *Le Village d'Éden* (1901) and much enhanced by Georges Roux's beguiling illustrations, Jules Verne introduces his manicled German proto-ethologist, Dr. Jausen (obviously modelled on Garner), to drive home the point about monkeys that "ce qui les distingue essentiellement des hommes" is that they "ne parlent jamais sans nécessité". Jausen was convinced that cognition preceded expression, that nothing prevented bees from speaking save their lack of intelligence, and, above all, that the so-called language of the ape "n'est que la série des sons que les mammifères émettent pour communiquer avec leur semblables, comme tous les animaux". Verne's venturesome character did much better science than his living exemplar, although, in a dramatic climax, the explorer pays for his only partially successful field trip through the loss of his own faculty of language: "Il est devenu muet".

The science of animal behaviour—and, as Julian Jaynes has traced them in their complex and sometimes confusing ramifications, the associated terms "ethology" and "comparative psychology"—began germinating in the era following the Baron Cuvier's extraordinary debates with his former collaborator, Étienne Geoffroy-Saint-Hilaire, around the 1830s.

This branch of the life science, which, as the Medawars recently noted, "perhaps a trifle optimistically", "now everywhere called 'ethology'", has been a fertile insight: that behaviour patterns are just as amenable to study, especially compared to each other in respect to their similarity gradients, as are organs and physiology. This was certainly taken for granted by Darwin, and no contemporary biologist ever doubts the applicability, tricky though it may be in the execution, of the idea of homology to behaviour.

Smith's main title poses an initial dilemma of which he seems not to be fully aware, while no one is likely to believe that an organism's behaviour, if it is to be called "behaviour", is rather exceptional in his recent advocacy of the point of view that we may, indeed, need to "reconsider the language capacity virtually as we would a physical organ of the body", and that we "can investigate the principles of its organization, functioning, and development in the individual and the species" by methods according with this viewpoint, which is, of course, in perfect conformity with what we know about the process. Lennberg and others called "differentiation—a gradual increase, from conception into adulthood, in the morphological, behavioural specializations and specificities. This concept is productively fitting to the semiotic maturation of all living beings, be they speechless or of uniquely language-endowed."

The philosophical prefigurings and early scientific accomplishments leading to what is now a semiology were quite adequately assessed in Friedrich Katz's *Die*

Displaying the symptoms

By Thomas A. Sebeok

"Sprache" der Tiere, published as a separate book in 1961. This somewhat eccentric essay has, however, been mostly ignored in the ensuing Anglo-American literature. Even W. John Smith never mentions it, but then his forty-four-page listing of references, which is, despite his modest disclaimer to the contrary, exceptionally comprehensive, includes only a small portion of the vast "foreign" literature. During the thirty-four years that separate Katz's original survey (1943) from Smith's present compendium, which he himself characterizes as still only "a prologue to the study of communication", the number of scientific publications on the subject has at least quadrupled. Two detailed technical reviews appeared in the interval, with contributions by diverse authors, dealing with many aspects of animal communication: the first, in 1968, consisting of twenty-four chapters, and a new one, in 1977, more than twice as long, of thirty-eight chapters (both collections with superb articles by Smith).

Side by side with the accelerating torrent of technical contributions there runs a rivulet of summative books, often in a popular vein, perhaps the most proficient among them the functional classification by Hubert and Mabel Frings (1964), which has just this year been replaced with a new chapter on "Recent Advances and Future Prospects". In the meantime, ethology—and such cognate fields as sociobiology or behavioural ecology—have, in general, continued to prosper, having been last anointed in 1973 by the awarding of a triple Nobel Prize under the mantle of physiology and medicine. Beginning with Darwin, in 1872, "ethology" has extended uneasy pseudopods, ever more aggressively in recent years, in the direction of anthropology: "human ethology" is now a recognized sub-discipline, with the customary academic accoutrements, the cleme and time of which are subjects of an international debate scheduled to be held in Germany at the end of October.

The hallmark of ethology, since its earliest days (Saint-Hilaire), has been naturalistic observation, in contradistinction to laboratory analysis (Cuvier). Smith, as his book makes signs, firmly recognizes himself with the ethological tradition, which has certainly yielded dramatic discoveries. These notwithstanding, one must not take the opposition too seriously. For example, the integration of signing into the behavioural repertoire of a chimpanzee to effect eventually spontaneous interaction between her and both humans and other animals was accomplished in the controlled atmosphere of a quasi-laboratory. And some of the profoundest and most consequential revelations in the entire field, having to do with, among other topics, communication about space/time, have come from the lifetimes of exceptionally distinguished work (surprisingly passed over in total silence by Smith) by Helmut Hediger, conducted in the macro-region of the circus and the zoo, which fail, with respect to the integration of behaviour between the ethologist's natural environment and the psychologist's laboratory.

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nated "unwitting index", or in some restricted contexts, "symptom". Smith tells us that the displays of animals should not "appear foreign to us", because our own non-verbal means of communicating "are fundamentally similar in form and origin . . .". That they nevertheless do seem so is due to the fact that the design of each speechless organism is suited for life in a singularly delimited environment. This stipulation conforms to the biological theory of Jakob von Uexküll—one of the most important framers of modern ethology, whose Kantian meditations first conjoined in an interesting way the life science with the sign science—according to which animals are capable of perceiving only a particular set of features from their environment; thus frogs, in their types of change occurring in their surroundings. This indigenous edi-

torial process is said to fabricate what he called their *Umwelt*, from which they derive their circumscribed choice of a small range of possible communicative actions governed by an arbitrary semiotic code, preset by past history and capable of being mutually grasped by both the message source and its destination. Uexküll's exposition is so lucid and convincing, his style theso so creative, that it is small wonder that it came to serve as a principal inspiration for René Thom's revolutionary topological ("catastrophe") theory.

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The clamour of the Gaels

By Anne Stevenson

DONALD MACAULAY (Editor):
Nua-Bharlachd Ghaidhlig
Modern Scottish Gaelic Poems
A Bilingual Anthology
220pp. Edinburgh: Southside. £4.95
(paperback, £2.25).

If Scottish Gaelic poetry ever becomes a cult in England, this will be due to the sudden (deserved) popularity of Sorley MacLean. His readings at the Cambridge Festival in 1975, and again in 1977, stirred up excitement among the English, although among the Celts MacLean has enjoyed a reputation as a major poet for years. That he is a poet of great stature is not to be questioned. Even in his own literal translations, the passionate symbolism and painful integrity of his vision announce that here ends all the cryptic shilly-shallying and black irony of failed romanticism. MacLean, indeed, offers an alternative not only to the irony, disillusion and embarrassment of a defensive literary culture (the English, I hope, will forgive my embracing such a definition) but to the righteous obviousness of much political poetry favoured by the young and concerned during the Vietnamese war.

Nevertheless, it would be an error for the English to make a cult of a foreign culture without knowledge either of its language or, more important still, of its complexity of reference. This is why Donald MacAulay's anthology *Nua-Bharlachd Ghaidhlig* is particularly welcome, and why it needs to be recommended to all aspiring bards who have been inspired by MacLean's rhetoric.

It is obvious from this collection of poems in Gaelic with parallel translations by their authors that MacLean is not a solitary inheritor of the Celtic past, but the innovator among a large number of Gaelic poets (large in proportion to the Gaelic audience) who have brought the same degree of radical change to the Celtic tradition as Eliot, Pound, Auden and others brought to Anglo-American poetry earlier in this century. In fact many of the same social and historical occurrences caused the literary revolution in Gaelic as in English, although the Scottish Gaels suffer a special legacy of persecution, family dispossession and foreign and religious domination that the English, as yet, do not.

All five poets included in MacAulay's anthology spent their early youth in rural communities of the Hebrides and Highlands, but were transplanted into what MacAulay calls "the ubiquitous outside world" for their education—and their "modern" experience. They share, therefore, the anxieties of participation in two cultures. Without exception, they are emotionally committed to the Celtic past, but intellectually they are drawn to the world about them.

Hugh MacDiarmid, by Emilio Cole, from the August double number of *Akros*, a special MacDiarmid issue edited by Duncan Glen. (114pp. £1.50 from 14 Parklands Avenue, Penwortham, Preston, Lancashire.) The issue contains half-a-dozen critical essays by various hands and several new poems by MacDiarmid.



Conflicts between love and politics, nationalism and internationalism, socialism, and between a pagan/Catholic inheritance and the Calvinist Christianity that brought about the decline of that inheritance, are their inevitable themes. All are obsessed with the "light" colour distances, mountains and lochs of their native scenery, but this obsession translates itself into symbolism—a symbolism foreign to English poetry, though familiar to the Irish and Welsh—which forbids the consolations of sentimental nostalgia.

Indeed, as MacAulay makes clear in his introduction, these modern Gaels have explicitly turned their backs on the half-yard stereotypes of the nineteenth century. They regard the process of change and decay in Western Scotland "with a much colder eye" than their romantic forebears, and the result is a poetry of stoic passion and compassion—which will remind some readers of W. B. Yeats and others of Edwin Muir, but which is really distinct and more original, linked as it is with the language of the Celtic tradition.

Sorley MacLean's poems, for instance, have a "proverbial" quality that goes back to the seventh century. Mary MacLeod's "Ocean Croon" contains the lines: "Our mairg a bheir gell / Do'n seòlaidh a' chomh / Is eib a' chomhail a' chomh."

Gur Donnholra a' chura / Na'n deall air an drùchd / Ann am mairg an tsa Malghe. (It is a foolish man who gives unreserved trust to the world. Often has it changed its course than the day in the morning in May's beginning.)

In the same vein, MacLean's "Woods of Raasay" ends: Chan oll eòlas, chan oll eòlas / air crìch dheirreannach gach tòraidh / le air seòlaidh an lùban / le air deall a' chura. (There is no knowledge, no knowledge, of the final end of each pursuit, nor of the subtlety of the bends with which it loses its course.)

Such obvious moralizing is not stylish in English, and that it should work in Gaelic is a measure of how different the two cultures are. Much, of course, is lost in translation, especially, one suspects, in the poetry of George Campbell Hay (Deorsa MacInn Deorsa) whose elegance as a technician is impossible to convey in English. Hay, like MacLean, fought in the Middle East during the Second World War, and like MacLean, emerged with a tragic sense of the disparity between what is ideally noble and beautiful (the landscape of north-west Scotland, the dignity of his past) and the actuality of modern warfare, greed and corruption. But like this, the theme sounds banal, but in Gaelic, again, rhetoric "works". Try playing themes from Scottish *Robaicheach* on the piano and hear how alien they sound without the intonation of the voice. Gaelic poetry, rendered into English suffers from the same insulting diminution. Gaelic, for instance, lends itself to assonantal and alliterative rhyme, perhaps in Old English. It is worth learning enough of the language to hear for instance that the following lines from Hay's "An Churach Coimhears" (The Smelly Ditch of Mice) contain no less than four parallel alliterative phrases:

Cha robh air a' bhàr, ach na
chaidh a' bhàr a' bhàr, ach na
chaidh a' bhàr a' bhàr, ach na
chaidh a' bhàr a' bhàr, ach na

Bha'n saoghal lùn de'n mhaointhe / dhraoidheachd is a' chloiche / is bharraichean mu seachd anns / achidhnan chobhaiche. (There was no landmark or direction to guide one on one's way. There was no place or time there, but one great, deep stillness. The world was full of tenderness, under clarity and under a cloak, and there was a fairly blindfolding on my eyes in the smoky drizzle of mist.)

Hay's most moving poem is perhaps an exhortatory piece which takes its title from the Arabic "Mefrah Babkum Es-Sabar"—"Patience is the key to our door." The Gaelic poet, however, rejects the implications of the Arabic text. Not for the Gaels is the "tyranny of the flaming sun and the violence of the hot skies of Africa" which begot the "bruised, dazed wisdom of these words". If there is to be between "struggling and life" and "peace and death", the Gaels will fight for life.

Oh, world, we are here and live on in spite of it; the hot ember is yet under the ashes.

The battlefield will be the battlefield of our will, the hearthstone we kindle our fire upon, the field our ploughment will awaken... the music of our forebears and the clamour of our singing; the book where we will write new poetry below the last verse put in it by the poets of old—such will be our land. Or, if there be no struggle, a mean thing of no account, hidden away in the day in a morning in May's beginning.

which another poem drained dry and forgot. "Mefrah Babkum Es-Sabar" could stand as a manifesto for at least three of these poets. This call to the battlefield of the will echoes that of the Gaelic poet, who, will, mind and duty that heretofore MacLean's love poetry. Could it be that the puritan conscience which came to the Scottish Highlands with the hated Puritan religion, when it opposed the formal creed, gave the Gaels an additional reason to fight for their inheritance? Intellectual puritanism is a passionate impulse when it is taken seriously—as it surely is in the poetry of MacLean and Hay. MacLean's "pure" socialism, postulates that personal love demands total sacrifice—either of political principles or of personal desire. Caught in the conflict between the two, MacLean's poems that he shirked the battlefield.

I did not take a cross's death in the sore extremity of Spain, and how then should I expect the one new gift of fate? I followed only a way that was small, mean, low, dry and lukewarm; and how then should I meet the thunderbolt of love? Paradoxically, this honest admission of weakness proposes that the only reaction to the thunderbolt of love is a "weakness" which is the only reaction to the thunderbolt of love.

Donald MacAulay, the youngest of these poets and the editor of this volume, wrote the familiar Gaelic rhymes of regret, anger and identity with his people. But MacAulay is also critical. The narrowness, selfishness and hypocrisy of the Highland community of his day, no longer a community of belief, his religion has become a macabre habit. They ask of me only to weep repentance for a sin that does not concern me and I shall get in return an alien freedom I don't understand. MacAulay's bitterness presages, it seems, a failed Gaelic romanticism. His poems are briefer, more realistic, less courageous and less self-significant than the others. If Smith is the Gaelic Ted Hughes, then MacAulay is a Philip Larkin. Allowing for the immense discrepancies between the two cultures, it seems, alas, that the rot of realism has set in. There is no escape from the present either in Gaelic or in English.

The three (relatively) younger poets represented in this anthology were too young to fight in the World War, yet old enough to feel acutely the changes which the war and society in general brought to Celtic culture. Their poetry is at once more personal and more concerned with their own experience of loss—and less confessional. Sorley MacLean loved a real woman, was rejected by her, went away to the war and fought with his personal anguish in the battlefield of nations. Derick Thomson (Ruraidh MacThomais) regards the decline of Gaelic from the sadder, more resigned perspective of his quiet understanding. His poems lack the fierceness of MacLean's and Hay's, but they burn with intelligent insight.

Unfortunately, there is not enough space here to do his excellent poems justice. Among the best are (in English) "Harvest Field", "The Well", "A Geo in the Son's Shutter" and "Clouds". In Thomson's poems the difficult symbolism of MacLean is made more explicit. The poet's island (Lewis) and its culture is seen as a woman, old or young, depending on whether the poet is thinking of his innocence or his experience. Calvin is the selector who "set a bonfire in our breasts", and laid a "coffinal of songs" in the earth. The picture that is broken is the Gaelic image which keeps control over false images in his mind. The most moving and accessible of Thomson's poems is "An Tobair" (The Well) in which a village well (the source of Gaelic culture) is compared to an old woman's eyes.

I saw the bracken growing round the well of her eyes, and hiding it from seeking and closing it, closing it. "Nobody goes to that well now-days" said the old woman, "as we went once, when we were young, though the water is lovely and white."

And when I looked in her eyes I saw through the bracken that marked the path of every hurt, till the hurt of the heart. I saw a symbol, with a young face, but a symbol of fear enough to touch.

John Crichton Smith (Iain Mac A'Ghobhann) is the only poet represented who writes poetry both in Gaelic and in English, which is why, probably, the poems sound like poems even in translation. They are more polished, more "modern", more surrealist than the others, and may for that reason be the best ones for an English reader to begin with. Still, perused carefully, one sees that the same surprising symbolism is at work, and the same sharp proverbial wit. "It was Death that killed him and not the bullet," Smith writes in "At the Cemetery". In "A Letter to God" he asks:

Why did you put the rabbits in the bolles of the foxes? Why did you put man in the bolles of the dogs? Why did you raise us with frail bones?

The rhetoric is not unlike that of Ted Hughes. Possibly Smith, like Hughes, has been influenced by a temporary "American" and middle-European poetry. His voice sounds more English than Gaelic, and occasionally his poems seem to be just a little too worked-over—just a little too well-adjusted to selfconscious modernism.

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Situations for snoozing

By Edwin Morgan

ROBERT GARIOCH:

Collected Poems

208pp. Londen (Midlothian): Macdonald. £6.95.

This impressive, highly entertaining, and often moving book gathers together forty years of work by a poet who is regarded with much affection and respect in Scotland. Most of it is in Scots, which might seem to make it less exportable than would be hoped, but English readers will find it particularly engaging and not too obscure Scots, coming across in dramatic humour, evident satire, or simply some of voice. Once the conventions of spelling have been recognized, the language is a finger hooked in the glossary, it should not be too difficult to obtain pleasure from this poetry. Without having ever been much inclined towards theory or poetics, Garioch manages to evolve a language that succeeds to a remarkable degree in combining the sense of a speaking voice, a spoken Scots basis, with sometimes quite severe demands from metre or rhyme. In this, he is very much like a craftsman, ingenious and inventive where necessary, yet hoping for a marriage of ingenuity and naturalness when it comes to the overall effect. But the craftsman does not forget that he is a craftsman. Scots, and in particular the Scottish situation in politics and politics being what it is, he will involve his language in tests of different kinds to see what it can do. An epigram on "The Rhymer's Rhymer" of Silences" goes:

Virr (truly), wi the heldmark e, nae dūing but nūcht [energy], a met [measure] of ergs, skive [sheer] power, is parogall [equal] wi wochitid [mass] times against squart at that. Gode hand the dell in thrall!

The classic difficulty of forcing a language or dialect to encompass subjects it has not been developed to deal with is taken to the limit in a long fourteen-page poem, "The Muir". This poem, commonly regarded as rather heavy going, can become deeply interesting if one determinedly follows the line of thought, and if one has some sympathy with the attempt to use Scots in philosophic and scientific verse. A stretch of Highland moor is the setting for a meditation on various kinds of reality: the "probabilities" of subatomic events in modern physics, the concrete vision of Dante's hell, the delusions of hell caused by the poet Robert Ferguson in his madness, the Johnsonian realism of kickable stone and earth.

But it's long since [since] Wilson showed the changes that occurred in the hair-chamber [cloud-chamber], wha a something sprang forth frae the atom, leaving a lang whang [silence] of droplets, lang eneuch, that is, to a wug [a bang]...

Another longish poem where the reader is struck by the tension between language and theme is "The Wice": in this case the nightmare, described scene of guards and barbed wire, half symbolic, half recollected from the author's experience of POW camps in the Second World War, strongly suggests Edwin Muir and Kafka but is presented in careful Scots rhyming stanzas. The Scots stanza does not push the poem even remotely in the direction of a ballad; and on the other hand, the Muir-like theme does not have any effect of thinning out the Scots towards English. It is an interesting, if slightly over-conscious, invasion of a hitherto unexplored area.

Such poems as these are doubtless not at the centre of Garioch's work, but they are worth advertising—as indeed recommending—as examples of his willingness to take risks in extending his range beyond the role of "humorous observer of contemporary foibles" which is sometimes thrust, not unfairly but misleadingly, upon him. As an observer and commentator he is extremely good, witty and gladly relating his work to the persistent strain of satire in Scottish poetry. His own satire tends to be at the ironic and gentle rather than the savage and hysterical end of the spectrum, and is frequently mixed in with elements of fable and fantasy that

become attractive in their own right. There is a "hard-edged" tradition of Scottish satire, from William Dunbar to Alexander Scott (the present-day one), which is impressive in its downrightness; but usually intertwined with it is the slyer, more snoozing approach of other poets, from Robert Henryson to Robert Garioch, who try to win us over deviously. (To snooze is a favourite Garioch verb, meaning to "move smoothly and quietly".) Among the most typical of Garioch's poems in this respect, and certainly among his best, are "The Perceptible Swan", "Perfect", "The Cany Hen", "Cooling-off", "Le-ann", and the Edinburgh Sonnets. Sisyphus and the swan are both caught in the cash-nexus. Sisyphus, trundling his work-rock up a hill, has carpenter's describe his endless struggle to make wood, a living and resistant thing which "wants to rax [stretch] itself and twist about", do what he plans for it to do, cutting it, planing it, staining it various colours ("Indigo, even if I'm in the mood"), aware all the time that he has to work with nature against nature, always the master but never equally winning; but now there is a machine—

I set the hummles on the dials, press a button. Out comes, say, Houduras mahogany, shude nino. I dinnae ken wha it got that. I dinnae ken wha it's made of. But I dinnae like it. I set the hummles on the dials, press a button. Out comes, say, Houduras mahogany, shude nino. I dinnae ken wha it got that. I dinnae ken wha it's made of. But I dinnae like it.

The I has power of rational thought, I canna win out, stu I have been bocht. Gin [if] I was guid I wad gae mud, but my salvation is that I'm bad.

I'm pey-near [very nearly] ready to gie a wee chanon; there'll be a flap whan ye hear my swan-song. For my sang nae foretell no my ain destruction;

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ERIK FRYKMAN:
"Unemphatic Marvels"
A Study of Norman MacCaig's Poetry
70pp. Gøteborg: ACTA Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Sv.Cr.50.

NORMAN MACCAIG:
Tree of Strings
64pp. Chatto and Windus. £2.25.

There are no personal acknowledgments to Norman MacCaig in Erik Frykman's study and it is an interesting coincidence that the title of the little book, taken from a MacCaig volume of 1955, a poem about Breughel.

Marvelous matter-of-fact notations about the unemphatic Marvels should be picked up and varied in Frykman's study of MacCaig's disreputable love poems, "Small Reins".

Not me, I looked at you, all colubry with seeds of winter, changed from summer to Spring. I had absolutely no way of saying how vivid can be unemphatic, how unemphatic can be brighter. You were smiling, and no wonder. The fact that "bright" is certainly a word (what we could call the bright as a concrete sensation as contrasted with the abstract notion of "vivid" (the vivid) is similarly a noun and "unemphatic" an adjective. MacCaig, Scotch among poets, demands that kind of alert construing.

Mr Frykman rightly points out that the rather vague and amiable notion of the "Scottish Renaissance" is not much help with MacCaig and with the help of two articles, one by Robert Fulton and the other by Gary Scott, suggests that specifically literary influences are the Imagist movement, Wallace Stevens, the Augustan balance of David Hume's Edinburgh. These are good clues, but not quite sufficient. Like many Scottish poets, MacCaig is a poet of the land, and his land is a perpetual posture of loss in a perpetual posture of loss.

I call rhyme the end of your hale (whole) stupid facium.

Here, "good" means bad, and "bad" means good, but the prevailing humour blunts the radical potential—without, however, removing it—and this is in keeping with Garioch's generally non-militant attitude.

"Bridier Worm", with its long winding unrhymed line, shows a long worm emerging unexpectedly from a tiny crack in the solid stone pavements of Georgian Edinburgh; the worm subtly reminds Garioch, staunch conservatism though he is, of the indomitable under-pressure of living nature, to which even the finest architecture is "unnatural" and will someday, somehow be brought down. The ancient argument of what is natural or unnatural is taken up in another poem, "Perfect" where a skilled carpenter describes his endless struggle to make wood, a living and resistant thing which "wants to rax [stretch] itself and twist about", do what he plans for it to do, cutting it, planing it, staining it various colours ("Indigo, even if I'm in the mood"), aware all the time that he has to work with nature against nature, always the master but never equally winning; but now there is a machine—

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Perhaps, to the craftsman-poet, the obsolescence of craftsmanship must always be countered by thoughts of brother worm who pokes his admonitory head through the flagstones to remind us that even professionally laid stones are but rocks

after all, the stonemason himself a part of nature. But what if a machine surfaces the roads in such a way that the worm cannot get out? Garioch finds off that particular pessimism, though in his poetry as a whole there are some dark glances towards the future, without any idealizations of the past. His sprightly Edinburgh Sonnets, occasional poems in the best sense, show his keen sense of the present, and his enjoyment of it. Nips at officialdom, at street gangs, at avant-garde music, at religious propriety, at headmasters at universities, at no shining in pubs, combine with a rueful picture of himself at an open-air function, in his MA gown, being mocked by the local youth. Splendid last lines remain in the mind. "Wit daur doleat religion on a Sunday?" "Well, gin they arena deid, it's time they were." "Shame on them as, whatever they were daean!" "And what a time a reel of tape can play!"

A deeper personal note is heard in some poems—the mainly haunting "My Father Sees Me", the home-thoughts-from-abroad longings of "Letter from Italy" the classically measured yet powerful sense of mixed regret, tribute, and anger in "At Robert Fergusson's Grave". The strong impact of the first and last of these, in particular, makes the reader wish for more in this vein, and makes him a little impatient with some of the light verse included in the last section of the book.

It only remains to add that the volume contains a substantial batch of very accomplished translations of very accomplished poets: Giuseppe Belli, Pindar, Goethe and Apollinaire. The élan and virtuosity of the Belli sonnets, and the curious yet acceptable transformations of a Scots Apollinaire, are among the bonuses of this highly recommended collection.

The variousness of things

By G. S. Fraser

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And one of the discreet love poems, "Mourning Teat", about someone who gives the poet "a stony look", suggests that an elderly man can still be as lusty as a young lover.

I took the look home and became uneasy. I couldn't see it as other than a hard design. Are you water? or diamond? I presume for things shifting. And lucid, not locked in a hard design. I mustn't look at you with the wrong eyes. Inventing what I want to see. Turn And let me know if I'm a millionaire. Of water or a pauper of diamonds.

MacCaig once told a seminar class of mine that he had no imagination, only (one deduced) a very low modesty to say so) wit, fancy, his eye on the object. In this, as in much else, the poet roughly contemporary with him whom he most resembles is Louis MacNeice. Both poets have the same sense of "the drunkenness" of things, being various, a sense which MacCaig expresses with a ferocious anger against the monistic idealism which still lingers in odd corners of Scottish universities.

But the essence I you shout, with the mind light. Of mysticism lotused in each eye. My face is Johnnathan Kiek and the stony stare. I'm not a bird's flight nor an I marshmallows. Do I prevaricate? Can I be an abstract budget. An essential chair, universal saw. Since my right hand doesn't know what my left hand's doing. And if I'm wrong I'm right to be wrong?

The man who can write such lines—over if it does require philosophical literacy reader to follow them fully—is certainly the most witty and interesting mind, fully at work on poetry in Scotland today. He deserves a full collected volume and a much longer and deeper study than Mr Frykman's brief, competent but not superlative monograph.

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